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ABSTRACT

A values-audit was developed and tested with randomly selected Southwest Texas State University faculty, students, professional educators, and the general population in the university's service area. A questionnaire was designed and structured to elicit information concerning perceptions of issues associated with the university's teacher education program. Analysis of results indicated that the university's teacher education program is broadly viewed as constituting a valuable aspect of the total university. It was clear, however, that no formal or informal consensus existed among those persons most directly involved in the teacher education process. While almost all respondents agreed that greater rigor was desirable in all coursework, wide disagreement existed among the three groups (faculty, students, and public) regarding the degree of emphasis to be placed on subject matter content and skill development in instructional processes. The data reflected a general perception that a real difference existed in the quality of education and non-education faculty and likewise between education and non-education students. The survey items and a table of responses are appended. (CB)

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THE VALUE OF TEACHER EDUCATION: A REPORT OF A VALUES-AUDIT

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THE VALUE OF TEACHER EDUCATION: A REPORT OF A VALUES-AUDIT

The roles, functions, and general image of any institution of higher education are determined by the goals and policies which are established by the major decision-makers of that institution. All too frequently, however, decisions regarding programs, policies, and procedures are made without adequate consideration of the beliefs and values of different constituencies of that institution. Clearly, when the values of persons and programs which are affected by those decisions differ significantly from those on which policies, procedures, and regulations are based, dissatisfaction and dysfunctional conflict are likely to exist. Thus, it is imperative that good decision-making must be based on a clear knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and values held by members of different constituencies within the institution. A major goal of each institution, then, should be one of accurately auditing the values held by those constituencies.

Historically, Southwest Texas State University has been viewed primarily as a "teacher education institution" (Brown, 1979). In recent years, however, the desirability and value of such an image has been questioned by a number of administrators and faculty within the University. Additionally, remarkable growth in size and complexity of the University, coupled with increasingly complex demands on teacher education programs, has led to serious questions being raised regarding program content, organizational structure, and administrative responsibility for

those programs. In order that decisions regarding these questions may be based on adequate and appropriate data, a values-audit regarding teacher education was conducted. While the concept of a values-audit has its roots in the corporate social-audit model, the values-audit developed for use in this study was based on the general model proposed by the Society for Values in Higher Education. It consisted of three components--a historical analysis, personal interviews, and the use of a questionnaire. This report describes the results of the questionnaire component of the SWTSU values-audit.

THE STUDY

Instrument--During the 1985 spring semester, a 16-item questionnaire (Education Survey) was developed for distribution to randomly selected Southwest Texas State University faculty, students, professional educators, and the general population in the Southwest Texas State University service area. While the items used to gather demographic data differed for each group, the questionnaire items were identical for all three groups.

The questionnaire was designed and structured to elicit information from each respondent concerning his/her perception of different issues associated with the teacher education program at Southwest Texas State University. Respondents were asked to rate their responses to each question in two ways. First, each question required a response of strongly agree to strongly disagree on a five-point Likert scale. Second, each question required the respondent to place a value on his/her response of very important, important or unimportant. The items included on

the Education Survey are shown in Table I.

(Insert Table I about here)

Subjects--A five percent random sample of the SWTSU faculty was drawn during the 1985 spring semester. Thirty-eight responses were returned constituting a return rate of 59%. Respondents represented all schools in the University and an approximately equal ratio of ranks (i.e., Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor). While approximately 50% of the respondents indicated that they held public school teaching certificates, more than 58% reported no public school teaching experience.

Approximately 200 students representing all levels of classification (senior, junior, etc.) and all schools within the University were asked to respond to the Education Survey. A total of 187 usable returns were obtained. Of that group, 36% indicated that they were seeking teacher certification, 55% were not seeking teacher certification, and 9% were undecided about a major.

Representatives of the SWTSU Teacher Center were asked to distribute copies of the Education Survey to their friends, acquaintances, and colleagues. A total of 94 usable questionnaires were obtained. Of those responding, more than 85% hold either a bachelor or masters degree. Less than 5% did not graduate from college. Thirty-eight percent graduated from Southwest Texas State University. Approximately 90% hold public school teacher certification and of that group, more than 90% indicated 1 or more years of teaching experience.

Results -- Responses to each item were tabulated and the percentage of responses were computed for each category. For descriptive purposes, responses to the "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" categories were combined as were the responses in the "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" categories. Thus, three interpretive categories are used in this paper-- Agreement, Undecided, and Disagreement.

It is important to note that over 95% of the respondents in all three groups (Faculty, Students, and Public) believed that most of the issues addressed in the Education Survey were important and critical. The major exceptions occured on those issues which are internal to the university community and are of little interest or concern to observers not involved with University affairs. These issues centered on questions about who should supervise student teachers and the relative status of "education" versus "non-education" faculty.

The percentage of responses in each category given by each group are shown for each item in Table II.

[insert Table II about here]

Based on the data presented in Table II, the folowing conclusions may be drawn:

1. Since more than 95% of the respondents indicated that most of the issues in the questionnaire were important, the issues addressed in each item are apparently among those which are of interest and concern to most respondents.
2. The student group tended to respond with a higher

proportion of "undecided" responses than the other two groups. A lack of an experiental basis on which to make an informed judgement seems to account for the negatively high degree of indecision.

3. Individuals within the three groups strongly supported the ideas that teacher education is a valuable part of the university curriculum and that teacher education should continue to be one of the major roles of SWTSU. They also tended to support the idea that retention of the image as a "teacher education institution" was desirable. However, the degree of support of the latter issue was significantly weaker.
4. While individuals were relatively confident regarding their own beliefs, they tended to be more ambivalent and indecisive about how they thought others perceived the issues. It would appear that no clear position is held by any given group, or at least, that position is not obvious to the outside observer.
5. Rather large differences of opinion exist between the "faculty" and "public" groups on the question of emphasis on the development of greater instructional skills. Fifty-eight percent of the faculty group supported greater emphasis while 88% of the "public" group supported the same issue. Thirty-four percent of the faculty group were against greater emphasis on instructional skills while only 5% of the "public" group was against the proposition. Students tended to support

greater emphasis but also a greater degree of ambivalence or indecision.

6. All three groups strongly supported the desirability of a greater emphasis on mastery of subject matter. However, when asked to decide which is more critical, instructional skills or subject matter, wide differences arose. Faculty and students were rather evenly divided on the issue whereas the "public" group voted rather strongly in favor of instructional skills as being the more critical of the two.

   It should be noted that the "public" group consists of a sizable proportion of public school teachers. Consequently, it would appear that the differences between the groups can be accounted for as a difference between "theoretical" (faculty and students) and "practical" (practicing teachers).

7. All three groups tended to support the following issues:
   (a) Departments teaching academic specializations should be responsible for both the subject matter content and the development of instructional skills for that specialization.
   (b) Supervision of the student teachers should be primarily the responsibility of the departments in which the academic specializations are taught.
   (c) Public school teaching experience should be a requirement for faculty who teach courses in the teacher education program.

8. All three groups reflected indecision regarding the relative scholastic rigor of "education" versus "non-education courses. The matter seems to be one of individual perception with no basis for consensus of perception.

9. Approximately one-half of each of the three groups suggested that differences do exist with respect to faculty who teach "education" courses and those who do not. Also, there was a tendency to believe that there are differences in the scholastic ability of students who seek teacher certification and those who do not. In neither case, however, was the nature of the perceived differences specified.

Summary and Conclusions

The teacher education program at SWTSU is broadly viewed as constituting a valuable aspect of the total University program. Strong support exists for its retention as a major mission of the institution. Critical differences exist, however, among the major constituencies involved in the study regarding a number of major issues.

First, individual respondents appeared to have clear beliefs and opinions regarding what is currently true of the teacher preparation program and what it should be in the future. However, those same individuals did not appear to feel at all confident regarding how others perceive the same issues. It is clear, therefore, that no formal or informal concensus exists

among those persons who are most directly involved in the teacher education process.

Second, while virtually all respondents agreed that greater rigor was desirable in all coursework, wide disagreement existed among the three groups in the study regarding the degree of emphasis which should be placed on subject matter content and development of skills in instructional processes. University faculty, more than half of whom never had courses in instructional techniques and had never taught until being employed by a college or university, tended to negate the value of coursework in instructional processes. Those individuals, however, who are currently teaching in the public schools and many of those university faculty members who have had public school teaching experience tend to suport the need for greater emphasis on instructional processes.

The data reflect a general perception that a real difference exists in the quality of "education faculty" and "non-education faculty". In like manner, differences were perceived between "education students" and "non-education students". Since the questionnaire was not designed to investigate the nature and degree of these differences, additional research must be conducted to ascertain what these differences are.

Finally, the administration of the "values audit" provided a forum for bringing concerns of individuals to the attention of

those who are primarily responsible for the teacher education program and the University in general. Considerable dialogue was generated in a variety of areas. This dialogue tended to raise more questions than answers regarding the teacher education program. To the end that dialogue was generated, that tentative answers were obtained, and the high probability that additional dialogue and research is likely to obtain, the values audit was found to be a useful and effective means of evaluating the teacher education program.

TABLE 1

EDUCATION SURVEY ITEMS

1. Preparation of teachers should be one of the major roles of SWTSU.

2. I believe that the teacher education program at SWTSU constitutes a valuable aspect of the university curriculum.

3. Regarding each of the groups listed below, I think they believe that the teacher education program at SWTSU constitutes a valuable aspect of the university curriculum.

   a. the SWTSU faculty
   b. the SWTSU administration
   c. SWTUS students
   d. the general public in the SWTSU service area

4. I believe that maintenance of an image of SWTSU as a "teacher education institution" is desirable.

5. Regarding each of the groups listed below, I think they believe that maintenance of an image of SWTSU as a "teacher education institution" is desirable.

   a. the SWTSU faculty
   b. the SWTSU administration
   c. SWTSU students
   d. the general public in the SWTSU service area

6. Greater emphasis than currently exists should be placed on the development of instructional skills of prospective teachers.

7. Greater emphasis than currently exists should be placed on requiring prospective teachers to learn subject matter content.

8. Knowledge of subject content is more ciritical to effective teaching than is skill in using instructional strategies and techniques.

9. Departments teaching academic specializations should be repsonsible for both the content and process components of the teacher education program.

10. Supervision of student teachers should be primarily the responsibility of the department in which the academic specializations are taught.

11. Faculty who teach "education" courses in departments of

academic specializations, hold equal status within that same department with faculty who do not teach "education" courses.

12. In general, "education" courses are as scholastically demading as (non-education) courses.

13. A public school teaching background should be required of all faculty who teach "methods" courses for prospective teachers.

14. In general, there is no apparent difference in the quality of faculty who teach "education" courses and faculty who do not.

15. In general, there is no apparent difference in the scholastic ability of students who seek teacher certification and those who do not.

16. Elimination of the teacher eduction program at SWTSU would detract from the university's image.

TABLE II

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES OF EACH MAJOR SURVEY GROUP TO EDUCATION SURVEY ITEMS

ITEMS	Group	Faculty			Students			Public		
	Percentage	%A	%U	%D	%A	%U	%D	%A	%U	%D
1. Preparation of teachers should be one of the major roles of SWTSU.		89	3	8	78	15	7	88	3	9
2. I believe that the teacher education program at SWTSU constitutes a valuable aspect of the university curriculum.		92	0	8	82	15	3	95	3	2
3. Regarding each of the groups listed below, I think they believe that the teacher education program at SWTSU constitutes a valuable aspect of the university curriculum										
a. the SWTSU faculty		68	24	8	80	17	3	71	26	3
b. the SWTSU administration		74	10	16	69	25	6	62	32	6
c. SWTSU students		68	24	8	59	33	8	63	34	3
d. the general public in the SWTSU service area		79	21	0	48	45	7	60	34	6
4. I believe that maintenance of an image of SWTSU as a "teacher education institution" is desirable.		71	3	26	57	22	21	89	6	5

Table II continued on next page

TABLE II (continued)

ITEMS	Group	Faculty			Students			Public		
	Percentage	%A	%U	%D	%A	%U	%D	%A	%U	%D
5. Regarding each of the groups listed below, I think they believe that maintenance of an image of SWTSU as a "teacher education institution" is desirable.										
a. the SWTSU faculty		45	13	42	66	24	10	60	34	6
b. the SWTSU administration		50	21	29	66	27	7	59	31	10
c. SWTSU students		31	45	24	44	36	20	55	40	5
d. the general public in the SWTSU service area.		53	42	5	42	45	13	60	30	10
6. Greater emphasis than currently exists should be placed on the development of instructional skills of prospective teachers.		58	8	34	74	20	6	88	7	5
7. Greater emphasis than currently exists should be place on requiring prospective teachers to learn subject matter content.		81	9	10	72	23	5	85	9	6
8. Knowledge of subject content is more critical to effective teaching than is skill in using instructional strategies and techniques.		42	11	47	46	19	35	29	5	66

TABLE II continued on next page

TABLE II (continued)

ITEMS	Group	Faculty			Students			Public		
	Percentage	%A	%U	%D	%A	%U	%D	%A	%U	%D
9. Departments teaching academic specializations should be responsible for both the content and process components of the teacher education program.		60	11	29	68	24	8	61	12	27
10. Supervision of student teachers should be primarily the responsibility of the department in which the academic specializations are taught.		71	5	24	74	18	8	58	12	30
11. Faculty who teach "education" courses in departments of academic specializations, hold equal status within that same department with faculty who do not teach "education courses".		63	8	29	63	30	7	54	26	20
12. In general, "education" courses are as scholastically demanding as academic (non-education) courses.		45	50	5	60	25	15	44	12	44
13. A public school teaching background should be required of all faculty who teach "methods" courses for prospective teachers.		63	8	29	68	27	7	96	1	3

TABLE II continued on next page

Table II (continued)

ITEMS	Group	Faculty			Students			Public		
	Percentage	%A	%U	%D	%A	%U	%D	%A	%U	%D
14. In general, there is no apparent difference in the quality of faculty who teach "education" courses and faculty who do not.		42	8	50	42	35	23	51	17	32
15. In general, there is no apparent difference in the scholastic ability of students who seek teacher certification and those who do not.		34	16	50	49	30	21	39	17	44
16. Elimination of the teacher education program at SWTSU would detract from the university's image.		92	3	5	72	19	9	87	10	3

References

Brown, Ronald (1979). Beacon on the Hill: SWTSU New York: Taylor Publishing Co.